Street Leadership

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
June 22-25, 2010

Auditorium B
Illinois State Police Academy
Springfield, Illinois

This 32-hour training program was developed to give first-line police leaders the hands-on experience they need to overcome difficult tasks associated with assembling and leading a small team of police officers into dangerous incidents. All too often, at the scene of an “officer down” or “active shooter” incident, the police response is haphazard as the officers arrive in a disorganized, staggered response.

The Street Leadership course allows first-line police leaders to practice leadership skills in a number of stressful problems using both the BowMac Model City Simulator© and live-action scenarios.

Topics covered:
• Leadership Styles and Case Studies
• The Role and Responsibilities of the First Responding Supervisor
• The Seven Critical Tasks a Leader Needs to Accomplish at a Critical Incident Scene
• Risk Assessment and Tactical Decision Making
• Leadership of a Rapid Deployment Team
• The Leader's Role in Dealing with Critical Incident Stress
• Supervisory Obligations and Ethics
• Operational Planning, Using the ICS Model
• The Leader as a Trainer and Mentor
• Tactical Debriefing and After Action Reports

Instructors:
Mr. Richard Fairburn, Critical Incident Training Coordinator at the Illinois State Police Academy
Captain Steve Eake, Peoria Police Department (retired), Illinois Air National Guard (Command Chief Master Sergeant)
Lieutenant Patrick Murphy, Illinois State Police, Assistant Bureau Chief of Communications
Lieutenant Kent McDowell, Canton (Illinois) Police Department

Cost:
Tuition for the class is being covered by a grant through the Illinois Terrorism Task Force, but students/agencies will be responsible for their own lodging/meal costs. Academy-style lodging and meals are available for the four days (cost is approximately $100). Please mention if you require meals/lodging upon registration.

Registration:
Registration is limited to 28 sworn law enforcement officers. The deadline for registrations is June 1, 2010. To register, contact Gwen Morgan at 217/786-7054 or by email at: Gwen_Morgan@isp.state.il.us.

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New program teaches street cops leadership skills for critical incidents

The Street Leadership Course presented by Illinois State Police Academy (ISPA) has new sergeants working with pencils, pistols, and a giant model train set.

Two squads — one a single-officer car, the other with an FTO and a rookie — are called to a domestic disturbance in a residential area of a small city. Soon after the two-officer car arrives, the rookie calls over the radio: shots have been fired and the FTO taken hostage inside the residence. From there, the action unfolds rapidly.

- Additional units are sent to various locations to shut down streets and establish a perimeter.
- Gunfire is heard coming from the suspect house — a woman is reported shot and down in the street.
- An undercover van that had been working in the area arrives.
- A neighbor calls 911 saying that "long-haired men" were in his yard with guns out.
- That could be the UC team setting up surveillance on the house, but who knows?
- A TV crew is spotted and is almost certainly broadcasting from the scene already.
- An officer breaks ranks and is wounded attempting to rescue the injured woman.
- In time, dozens of police cars are dispatched to the incident, which continues to deteriorate...

It's all gone sideways.

It's also all in 1:64 scale — a tabletop training exercise recently attended by more than two dozen officers from agencies including the Illinois State Police and a handful of other municipal and county departments.

The five-day Street Leadership Course — presented by the Illinois State Police Academy (ISPA) and held in a substation of Lombard (Ill.) PD located in a large shopping center — consisted of classroom time, tabletop drills, and live scenarios. One of the designers of the course is one of PoliceOne's most popular columnists, Dick Fairburn, who serves as critical incident training coordinator with ISPA in Springfield.

"The foundation for this class was BowMac's groundbreaking 'Initial Response' course, which was arguably the first street-level leadership training program for U.S. police supervisors," Fairburn explains. "We hope this class will become the next evolution, taking first-line leadership training to a new level."

Recall that BowMac's training emphasized the need for police officers to not rush blindly into critical incident scenes. Fairburn says that in the past decade at least five incidents have occurred in which several police officers were shot and killed at a time as they rushed in to "unknown calls, or even worse, into calls where they knew one or more officers had already been shot."

"As we face increasing threats from ever more violent felons, who are increasingly armed with rifles, the need to slow our response and organize into teams becomes more important than ever. Should we face a Mumbai-style terrorist attack, conventional response tactics will only feed a steady supply of potential police casualties to the trained and prepared killers."

Fairburn points out that on the other side of that coin, incidents in which one or more attackers are actively killing in a populated place force police agencies and officers to "accept a higher level of risk and use rapid deployment techniques to stop the killing as quickly as possible — duty demands such a response."

The class is designed as a hands-on leadership training program for first-line police leaders to develop skills appropriate. In other words, it's intended to fill the vacuum between basic academy training and senior management courses. The way to do that, says its designers, is to combine three learning ingredients into one experience: classroom, tabletop, and live scenario training.

In the 32-hour course (roughly 16 hours in the classroom and eight hours each on the model city and live action training), about half the time is spent working within that BowMac Educational Services course material. The other half has been put together during the last year by Fairburn and an instructor cadre consisting of Sergeant Ed Mohn of Libertyville (Ill.) PD, Lieutenant Kent McDowell of Canton (Ill.) PD, as well as Lieutenants Paul Riggio and Pat Murphy of the Illinois State Police.

Midway through the morning of the second day, students listen to audio of the Columbine incident and are given the opportunity to debrief it. Other classroom elements of the course include:

- Critical Incident Stress
- Bomb Recognition
- Tactical Media Relations
- Basic ICS Refresher
- Supervisory Obligations and Ethics
- Rapid Deployment 2.0
- Writing After Action Reports
- Responsibility of First Responding Supervisor
- Leadership versus Management
- The Seven Critical Tasks (more on this below)
Boot Camp for Sergeants

In addition to the use of BowMac Model City, scenario training includes live outdoor drills with role players acting the parts of bad guys and innocents. Fairburn says that the concept for the course goes back to military training — he calls it a 'boot camp for sergeants.'

"I used to go out on the road and teach that BowMac course with one of the guys who invented it, and we both looked back to our military background. In the military, one of the first things that a new sergeant does is to take a leadership course where essentially they're leading their small unit into a combat situation. In law enforcement, there really isn't that kind of hands-on leadership instruction. There is a lot of stuff for lieutenants and above, but there really isn't a lot out there for that first-line supervisor — the guy who's in charge of five cops at a bad scene."

Course materials state that Street Leadership training is intended to "give each student hands-on experience in leading a small team of officers during high-risk incidents and events" during roughly eight hours spent working live scenarios.

Not surprisingly, Fairburn puts it a little more bluntly. "We want to take it to the next step because there are a lot of people who really just don't have the experience of barking out orders to a bunch of people in a high-stress environment — that's just a brand new experience for some people."

During the live scenarios, each officer has several chances to lead a team through the planning and response phases of different situations, ranging from an active shooter response to a downed-officer rescue. Since these scenarios focus on leadership issues — rather than the specific tactics employed — the students are equipped with inert "red guns" and not encumbered with protective equipment required with Simunitions training.

Among the four live-action scenarios, one is a felony traffic stop — it's one of those things that every cadet in every academy learns about. Fairburn says that this situation starts out with one person in the driver's seat and two people in the rear. "As the stop unfolds and we run some things for our students in real time, you begin to have a much more complex problem."

PoliceOne won't divulge what those challenges are — instead we'll skip ahead to the lesson being conveyed in the drill. "Cops are trained to be lone wolves. If we have a cop that doesn't know how to operate on his own a few weeks out of the academy, we fire them. Whereas firefighters always show up and work as a team. The big problem we see when we analyze critical incidents where law enforcement has a failure, it's almost always a failure of leadership — a failure of ten or eleven cops to become a team. The traffic stop scenario we do is a great example of that."

Life, in Miniature

Back to the tabletop exercise taking place on the BowMac Model City, where the weather is freezing, a mixture of snow and rain is falling, and sharp winds blow across the slush underfoot.

"Cops routinely don't like to do role-play — they just feel silly doing it. But I'll tell you that when they step up into that box, where there's two instructors — one playing the dispatcher giving them problems and the other filling the role of moving the police cars or whatever instructions they give — we've had people actually bend over and start yelling at little Matchbox cars. They get so drawn into it because it becomes very real for them. These are the people who hate role playing, and every time we look at our feedback, people are asking for more simulator time."

Sgt. Brian Melvin of Warrenville (Ill.) PD, who attended the most recent instance of the training, said he considers the tabletop exercises to be "pivotal for a good supervisor." Melvin commented on the value of experiencing "a steady stream of problems thrown at you that demand immediate decisions," and compared the emphasis on practical exercises in this training to conventional staff command training "where you don't learn anything useful."

This training, Melvin said, might someday help him "save lives."

Sgt. Will Mitchell of Lombard PD said that "so many classes just talk at you and you don't get to apply what you're learning. Here there's emphasis on practical applications, which makes the experience more realistic." In the tabletop, "problems come at you fast — just like they do on the street. You get caught up in it."

Terry Murphy, a master sergeant with the Illinois State Police working out of the Elgin office says the practical exercises are "the difference between talking about chess and playing chess" and says the requisite multitasking creates real stress. "Guys who are new supervisors really need this before they have to do it for real."

The debriefing, Murphy said, "reinforced good things that were done. That's a good method because we do so much tearing down in training."

On the walls in that classroom are two large posters with a list of seven critical tasks that a street-level leader must deal with:

- Secure Communications
- Identify Hot Zone
- Establish Inner Perimeter
- Establish Outer Perimeter
- Establish Command Post
- Establish Staging Area
- Identify & Request Additional Resources

Instructors look for ways to praise good decisions made by the students with an emphasis on decision-making and the coverage of these seven critical tasks — not specific field tactics.

Periodically, the student in the 'hot seat' will be rotated out and a new "sergeant" assigned to take over, picking up the action where his predecessor left off. This way, each student has the opportunity to be the incident commander and direct the response to the scenario — at various times the role-playing Sergeants called for SWAT, directed patrol units with rifles to the scene while SWAT is en route, commandeered heavy equipment that demands immediate decisions. The traffic stop scenario we do is a great example of that."

The exercise is halted when contact is established with the suspect. He has threatened to kill the hostage media present.

The incident commander and direct the response to the scenario — at various times the role-playing Sergeants called for SWAT, directed patrol units with rifles to the scene while SWAT is en route, commandeered heavy equipment behind which the downed woman could be rescued, and issued commands for dealing with the media present.

The exercise is halted when contact is established with the suspect. He has threatened to kill the hostage media present.

Time to debrief...

About the author

A veteran of more than ten years in online and print journalism, Doug Wyllie was writing about digital music before Napster, streaming video before YouTube, and wireless technology since the original Palm Pilot debuted. As senior editor of PoliceOne, Doug is responsible for the editorial direction of the PoliceOne website. In addition to his editorial and
managerial responsibilities, Doug writes on a broad range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community.

Read more articles by PoliceOne Senior Editor Doug Wyllie by clicking here.

Contact Doug Wyllie